

Segment 3 – Participative Decision Making

The speaker represents one of the Iowa case study districts that began applying the Iowa Professional Development Model in 2004.

We created a team called a leadership team, and the members of this team are myself, and then the next three are assistant principals; the next three are either our director of curriculum [who is] our associate superintendent, and then two people that are on special assignment who are very familiar with the high school; and then we have three persons in our building—each building has—that are called curriculum facilitators. That person who can kind of process some of the things that we want people to do. And the last three members are members of our AEA team within our building. So that was going to comprise the leadership team, and then that team was going to direct all of our work through the course of the year. And the work through the course of the year was going to be data-based.

From that leadership team, we've created three teams. I'm not on any of those, but each of the teams is headed by an assistant principal and headed by one person from the central office, and then we have the curriculum facilitator, and we have a cross section of people. I'll just take the math, for example: we have a science teacher, an English teacher, a math teacher; industrial tech, science, math; business, industrial tech, business; and an AEA person.

Each of those teams was then set up. They met on at least a weekly basis—7:30 in the morning they're cranking—then every other week—let me rephrase that. I said every week that group was meeting, but one week they're meeting as a focus group. The next week, they're coming back as a leadership team. And we're kind of comparing notes: Where are you going? Where are you hitting the wall? What “ah ha's” have you experienced? So our [schedule] was to meet on Wednesday morning as a focus group. The science group was doing one thing, reading [another], math [another].

We would come back the next week and compare notes and say: What do you need? What resources do you need? What help do you need? Where can we go with this idea? So we kept working with the idea of the focus groups in that area.

Where this led us, very frankly, as these focus groups evolved on these bi-weekly meetings, is that they didn't have enough time to do their work. So with about a month lead time, we said to them: What do you need in your position in order to spend three or four hours of quality time working on data?

With that in mind, we set up a half day: we hired subs on a half day basis for the members of that team, and we asked them to go over to central office. That is where the data piece comes into play.